

Email message, dated March 3, 2005, 5:49 p.m., to General Services, Budget Office, Energy Office, and Materials Management Office

What is spyware? "Spyware is any technology that aids in gathering information about a person or organization [with or] without their knowledge. On the Internet (where it is sometimes called *spybot* or *tracking software*), spyware is programming that is put in someone's computer to ... gather information about the user and relay it to advertisers or other interested parties. Spyware can get in a computer as a software virus or as the result of installing a new program." (Source: http://searchcrm.techtarget.com/sDefinition/0..sid11_gci214518.00.html.) So, the key here is that it can be installed on your computer with or without your knowledge.

After spyware is loaded, it can cause frequent, annoying popups on your PC. There are times when it can cause numerous other problems as well, a most significant problem being your computer becoming extremely slow.

Note that spyware can be loaded on your computer through:

1. Drive-by download: automatically downloaded to your computer, often without your consent or knowledge
2. A Pop-Up window: again, this can be automatically downloaded because of clicking on a window or because you gave permission to allow it
3. Adware: software designed to serve advertising and can include components for tracking and reporting user information

Most prevalent ways to receive spyware:

1. All browsers can allow spyware to be downloaded; however, Spyware happens most frequently when using Internet Explorer (IE).
2. By downloading screen savers and file sharing programs.
3. By visiting Internet game and porn sites; also, retail sites with frequent popup ads.
4. Via popups offering "a detected flaw" in your system or offering to "fix your system clock" or "system speed."
5. Through Internet advertisements where you respond.
6. Through offers of "free" prizes and/or "free software."

It is recommended, then, that you:

1. Use Netscape at work whenever possible, rather than Internet Explorer (IE).
2. Don't download unauthorized software such as screen savers, file-sharing programs or "free software" without first discussing with GS/IS.
3. Don't visit Internet game or porn sites.
4. Never, never respond to any online help to fix system flaws, your system clock, or to "remove spyware," or offers for free prizes.
5. Always click on the "X" in the upper right-hand corner of the popup when asked such questions as noted in #4 above.
6. Call IS if you encounter any situation where you suspect Spyware is involved.

Questions? Give anyone in IS a call!

Information Services